

The National Historic Landmarks Initiative in the Southeast Region

The National Register Programs Division in the National Park Service's Southeast Regional Office (SERO) in Atlanta, Georgia, is responsible for the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) program in the Southeastern United States and the American possessions in the Caribbean. From the early 1980s until 1988, SERO's primary involvement with NHLs was limited to working with the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, DC, to develop boundaries for NHLs designated before 1966.

NHLs designated by the Secretary of the Interior prior to the passage of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act became the first properties listed in the National Register. Some of these nationally-significant properties, however, did not have boundaries, which made the application of the Section 106 process and even grants-in-aid difficult. By 1993, documentation for all of the NHL boundary studies in the Southeast had been completed. The boundary studies for five archeological sites—Parkin Indian Mound, in Arkansas; Holly Bluff and Grand Village of the Natchez, in Mississippi, and Marksville and Poverty Point, in Louisiana—involved site visits, which were the first time many of these sites had been inspected by a representative of NPS in over two decades. Such inspections proved important not only in developing boundaries, but also in gathering up-to-date documentation on the significance of the sites, clarifying threats to the sites, and developing preservation programs with preservation partners.

For example, the Parkin Indian Mound Site in Arkansas had for a number of years been listed as a Priority 1 Endangered NHL in the annual Section 8 Report to Congress, and it was even proposed to de-designate the property as a NHL due to threats from a housing development. The NHL boundary study (completed in 1989 by this office)

for this nationally-significant Late Mississippian fortified mound complex reflected the latest information on the scientific interpretation of the site's significance. While the boundary study was being completed, SERO developed a partnership with The Archeological Conservancy (TAC), a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of significant archeological sites through acquisition. TAC began the process of acquiring the Parkin Site from over 60 landowners as a prelude to the State of Arkansas developing the site as a state park. Today, the Parkin Site is preserved. The public can visit the site and its outstanding interpretive museum and the State of Arkansas is sponsoring an on-going scientific research program at the site.

As the National Register Programs Division was completing its assignment in developing boundaries for older Southeast NHLs, it became apparent that archeological resources—both pre-

Caguana Site NHL, near Utuado, PR. This is the central plaza of the Caguana Site, the largest ceremonial Taino complex in the West Indies, containing 10 ball courts.

Photos by the author.



historic and historic—were not adequately represented in the listing of NHLs for the Southeast Region. In fact, since the archeological NHL theme studies completed over a quarter of a century ago as part of the NPS Mission 66 Program, only about half a dozen additional archeological sites had been added to the NHL list nationwide. SERO's boundary studies found there was substantial interest in the development of new prehistoric and historic archeological NHLs among

federal and state agencies, the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), the archeological and historical academic community, and preservation organizations.

These groups sent to SERO documentation on a variety of archeological resources they believed met the NHL criteria. Some of the sites recommended for NHL designation were sites previously identified as potentially nationally significant in the Mission 66 theme studies of a quarter century ago, but were never nominated. Other NHL recommendations consisted of significant sites found within the last 20 years and came from historic contexts in state plans created by the SHPO offices. In response to this interest the National Register Programs Division developed a process to quickly evaluate the potential of a property to meet the NHL criteria (prior to initiating a NHL study) in conjunction with the History Division, in Washington. This preliminary assessment approach proved effective and efficient in developing nominations for a dozen individual archeological properties, and the first Multiple Property NHL (Green River Shell Middens Archeological District in Kentucky) in less than three years.

These special studies allowed SERO to initiate NHL nominations with preservation partners serving as the main authors, and implement preservation options with these same groups. For example, the 18th-century Spanish colonial site of Los Adaes Presidio, located near Natchitoches, Louisiana, was designated in June of 1983. Its boundary was enlarged in November of 1993, due to the finding of new associated archeological sites. In 1996, the Louisiana State Parks used the boundary enlargement to acquire additional lands at the site for future public interpretation.

TAC acquired the Menard-Hodges Mounds Site in Arkansas as an archeological preserve. Designation of this 17th-century Quapaw site on the Arkansas River assisted the Conservancy in raising funds for acquisition. The Conservancy is currently fencing the site and working with the state to develop a preservation master plan.

The Hardaway Site, a major Paleo-Indian stone tool manufacturing site owned by the ALCOA Company, was designated an NHL in June of 1990. National recognition has created a program of site protection by the ALCOA Company and a commitment by the company to enter into a preservation program with the North Carolina SHPO.

The 18th-century Spanish colonial mission site of Guevavi in southern Arizona was designated a NHL in 1990. This Spanish colonial Jesuit mission site was studied by SERO because of specialized staff expertise in the archeology and history of the area. The request for SERO's assistance came from the Associate Director for Cultural Resources and was prompted by Congressional interest in adding this property as an outlier to Tumacacori National Monument. TAC acquired the Guevavi Site and the property is now owned by NPS. The result of this interest was a 100%



Jaketown Site, Humphreys County, MS. The Jaketown Site is a Poverty Point culture site (c. 1,000 BC).

increase in the number of archeological NHLs in the Southeast Region by 1990.

However, the National Register Programs Division realized that while special study NHLs had been successful, what was needed was a thematic NHL study of the southeast region to develop a sound comparative approach to the development of NHLs. In 1991, this office undertook a Historic Sites Survey of Historic Native American and Colonial Resources in the Southeast Region. Information for this theme study was derived from the original Mission 66 theme studies, consultation with federal and state agencies, anthropology departments, and state planning documents. Over 300 historic Native American and Colonial sites were considered in the theme study. Through the efforts of SERO and its preservation partners, over three dozen historic sites have been designated or are presently under development for the NPS by professional archeologists and historians who participated in the review of the historic sites theme study and expressed an interest in working with NPS to develop the nominations.

Historic Native American sites designated by the Secretary of the Interior as NHLs through this theme study include Bottle Creek Mounds Site, Alabama (designated April 1994); Yuchi Town Site, Alabama (designated June 1996); Eaker Site,

Arkansas (designated June 1996); Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty Site, Mississippi (designated June 1996); Caguana Site, Puerto Rico (designated November 1994); and Chucalissa Site, Tennessee (designated June 1994). Historic colonial or early American sites designated as NHLs through this theme study include Fort Mose, Florida (designated October 1994); the shipwreck site of the Maple Leaf, Florida (designated October 1994); Fort Boonesborough, Kentucky (designated June 1996); Caparra Site, Puerto Rico (designated April 1994); and Skysborg (Blackbeard's Castle), United States, Virgin Islands (designated October 1994).

Future American Indian NHLs from this historic sites theme study are under development for Creek, Calusa, Apalachee, Shawnee, and Timucua culture sites. Numerous nominations of Spanish, French, English, and Danish colonial sites are being prepared, along with sites associated with Moravians, African-American history, coffee and sugar plantations, shipwrecks, colonial warfare, and pirates.

The on-going success of the above theme study encouraged SERO to undertake two other landmark survey initiatives—Civil War Battlefields and Prehistoric Archeology Sites. The Civil War Battlefield survey identified approximately 130 potentially-significant battlefields in the Southeast, and resulted in the NHL designation or enlargement of NHL boundaries for seven battlefields—Corinth, Port Gibson, and Brices Crossroads, in Mississippi; Middle Creek, Perryville, and Mill Springs, in Kentucky; and Bentonville, in North Carolina. Many of these nationally-significant battlefields have benefitted, in the 1990s, from the American Battlefield Protection Program, ISTEPA, Civil War Trust, and the Historic Preservation Fund grants-in-aid, for acquisition and preservation planning.

In conjunction with the National Register Programs Division of SERO, the 11 Southeastern SHPO offices and over 150 professional archeologists worked on a new NHL study for prehistoric archeological sites. The national theme study for pre-historic archeological sites is currently in progress. SERO has a preliminary list of some 50 properties that are presently under consideration for NHL nomination. Priorities are currently being established for completion of individual and multiple property NHL nominations for future presentation to the Secretary's Advisory Board. Important "spin offs" from the above are commitments from state and federal agencies and scholars to undertake specific NHL studies. They will initiate the drafts and SERO will review them for continuity.

Although the NHL initiative of SERO was originally intended to be an archeological initiative, the historic period theme study also included

a small number of properties with standing ruins or structures. This effort also has served to correct problems observed in some SHPO programs in regard to the National Register during State Program Review. For example, when it was noted both the Puerto Rican and Virgin Island offices had experienced problems with nominations to the National Register, SERO began working with these offices to identify about a dozen potentially nationally-significant properties. SERO then made a multi-year technical assistance commitment to work with these offices to develop NHL nominations, which the state offices then first submitted to the National Register to gain valuable training in the production of Register nominations.

This effort has resulted in the revision and computerization of nearly all of the existing NHLs in the Caribbean and the development of a dozen new NHL nominations. SERO is now commencing a new program of technical assistance to these offices. For example, the Caguana Site, located in the central mountains of Puerto Rico, near Utuado, was first identified in a Mission 66 theme study as a potential NHL. SERO worked with the Puerto Rican office to develop a NHL nomination for Caguana, which is the largest ceremonial ball court complex in the entire West Indies. The property was listed in the National Register (using the NHL nomination documentation) in 1991 and designated a NHL in 1994. SERO is now working on a National Register multiple property nomination for the ball court sites in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, with both state offices. This nomination will also serve to identify other potential NHL ball court sites in the American possessions in the Caribbean. SERO is also working with the Puerto Rican office to complete a National Register multiple property nomination for resources associated with the Spanish-American War on that island, as a special centennial study, using a student intern from the Historic Preservation Program at Georgia State University.

The technical assistance provided by SERO to state offices is beginning to develop interest from them in undertaking NHL studies for non-archeological properties. For example, the National Register Programs Division worked with the City of Augusta, Georgia on a NHL nomination for the Old Medical College of Georgia Building, which was designated an NHL in 1996, for the national role of the medical college in the training of medical students in the 19th century. This office is also working with the Virgin Islands SHPO and the rabbi of St. Thomas Synagogue, in Charlotte Amalie, on St. Thomas, to develop a NHL nomination for the second oldest and longest in continuous use synagogue under United States authority.



Casa Cautiño, in Guayama, PR. This building was the headquarters General Fred Grant during the occupation of the island in the Spanish American War. Casa Cautiño is part of a proposed NHL.

The interest in the NHL program that exists in our region extends beyond the commemoration of nationally-significant properties. SERO and the SHPOs are actively using the Section 8 Annual Report to Congress to identify existing NHLs requiring improved documentation. This office has developed a centralized slide file for Southeast NHLs. As part of this effort, we are also developing a computerized "needs sheet" for all the Southeast NHLs. Each sheet contains the location of NHLs, the address of the owner/contact, endangerment status of the property, when it was designated an NHL, whether it has received a bronze plaque, when it was last visited, the NHL's theme and significance, and photographic information.

An important "need" identified in the above effort is to update and computerize a number of Southeast NHL studies. This office believes it is very important to be able to have these NHLs computerized for rapid reproduction of the nomination, and as a means of keeping the nominations up to date. For example, the Columbus Landing Site (Salt River Bay), USVI; Stallings Island, Georgia; and Okeechobee Battlefield, Florida are being updated by this office in conjunction with the appropriate SHPOs, which may require boundary or significance adjustments. All of these properties are currently listed as threatened or endangered in the annual Report to Congress.

In the Southeast, historic districts tend to be frequently listed as endangered NHLs primarily because of the lack of appropriate documentation needed for Section 106 decision-making. Currently, the SERO National Register Programs Division and the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) are completing a four-year survey effort of all the buildings in the Savannah Historic District. The popularity of Savannah as a tourist mecca is resulting in a number of new developments, along with federal projects, which are

threatening the integrity of the historic district. As currently written, the nomination does not provide decision makers with the information necessary to make coherent decisions about new development. SCAD's involvement has made possible the survey of one of the largest architectural NHL districts in the United States. SCAD students will be assisting the NPS in the development of the revised NHL study following completion of survey of the district.

Similarly, the National Register Programs Division is also re-studying the St. Augustine Town Plan Historic District with the St. Augustine Preservation Board. This new study has identified almost twice as many pre-1821 colonial structures within the district, and several significant colonial sites in and around the district, were as identified in the original 1970 NHL study.

The original intent of SERO's NHL efforts, to establish boundaries for existing NHLs, was completed, but this activity generated a positive interest on the part of preservation partners in working with NPS to establish new NHLs. From this, the National Register Programs Division undertook a number of theme studies leading to revised archeological and a large number of new Civil War and archeological site NHLs. Recently, this effort was extended to revising and creating new NHLs for architectural properties.

Throughout all of this effort, this office's goal has been to refine the data available on Southeast cultural resources to assist in the identification of potential new NHLs, or revise the data for older NHLs. Evaluation of potential NHLs using the NHL criteria and thematic framework is equally important in the identification process, leading to the completion of nominations through the cooperation of preservation partners. The last element of the National Register Programs Division's NHL initiative is to provide the appropriate type of technical assistance to the owners of NHL properties. The determination of which properties to provide technical assistance can come from information gathered for the Section 8 Report to Congress, contact with the NHL owners or SHPO offices, or through site inspections. The NHL Initiative of the Southeast Region's National Register Programs Division has been directly responsible for the increased number of NHLs and reduction of endangered and threatened NHLs in this region, and permitted our preservation partners to play an important role in all of the aspects of this initiative.

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